

**BOARD OF REGENTS
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

WORK SESSION Minutes

**Thursday, January 21, 2010
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

**The Rhode Island Department of Education – Shepard Building
5th Floor – Peter McWalters Conference Room
255 Westminster Street – Providence, RI 02903**

The work session convened at 11:30 p.m.

Regents attending: R. Flanders, P. Guida, C. Callahan, B. Shimberg, A. Beretta, K. Forbes, A. Davis

Commissioner's Comments

a. Budget Update

Commissioner Gist told the members of the Board that the Governor has asked the General Assembly for an extension on the submission of the FY2011 Budget. Additionally, that hearings have been ongoing in both the House and Senate for the FY2010 Supplemental Budget. RIDE staff has testified at many hearings on submitted budget articles. It is anticipated that this budget will be final in approximately 3-4 weeks.

b. Race to the Top

Commissioner Gist told the members of the Board that she had delivered the Rhode Island Race to the Top application to the U.S. Department of Education on Tuesday, January 19. She then briefly reviewed the proposal:

- The proposal seeks approximately \$125 million over four years to increase student achievement, close achievement gaps between student groups, increase the high-school graduation rate, and increase college enrollment.
- Among specific initiatives included in the proposal are:
 - work in partnership with other states to develop a common set of high-quality, internationally benchmarked standards and tests that will get students ready for college and careers;
 - share data with colleges and universities to better determine whether high-school graduates are prepared for success in college;
 - develop a model to measure student growth and use student growth as the primary component in measuring the effectiveness of teachers and principals;
 - use evaluations to improve professional development, create incentives for highly effective educators, and provide information to support decisions on renewal, tenure, and dismissal of educators;
 - attract high-performing charter schools and support innovative charters and other schools; and

-expand programs to recruit and train highly effective teachers and principals to work in the lowest-achieving schools in the state.

- As part of the Rhode Island proposal, 33 (of 36) school districts and all of the charter schools and state-operated schools in the state have signed on to be “participating districts,” which will receive significant amounts of the funds and will work with RIDE to develop a work plan for school reform and innovation. One other district supported the proposal as an “involved” district, which does not guarantee funding from the grant.
- RI-AFT has sent a letter endorsing the application; the Providence Teachers Union has committed to be a partner with us; and the Foster Teachers Union has signed a memorandum of understanding in support of the proposal.

c. Legislative Update

The Commissioner told the members of the Board that she had attended a General Assembly hearing on Thursday, January 7, 2010, to testify before the House Committee on Finance on education aid. (Article 9 of the Governor’s Supplemental Budget) Then on Tuesday, January 12, 2009, she was asked to testify before the Senate Government Oversight Committee, which is examining education mandates in Rhode Island. Commissioner Gist’s testimony before the Senate Committee included the following:

- The Department is willing to advocate for ending mandates that are not in the best interest of students and that do not advance learning;
- As red tape is cut and mandates are eliminated, Rhode Island must work to advance a high-quality education for Rhode Island students and to increase accountability;
- The Department stands ready to help - we’ll do anything we can to help the school districts manage their budgets and finances – so long as it doesn’t negatively affect student achievement;
- The Department will continue to work with its partners to develop more efficiencies and to invest resources wisely; and
- The Board of Regents and the Department want to be good stewards of tax payer dollars and are deeply committed to ensuring every Rhode Island student receives an excellent education.

The Commissioner also told the Board that she has met with House and Senate leadership on legislation to eliminate the cap on charter schools, and she is hopeful that the legislation will be introduced in the next two weeks.

Review and Discussion of the Funding Formula

The Commissioner reminded the members of the Board that at the November 19 Board of Regents work session, they were told that the Department would be working, for Regent review, on funding-formula language and calculations that may be introduced in this legislative session. Since then, RIDE has partnered with Dr. Kenneth Wong, from Brown University, on the development of a research-based, data-driven methodology for an education-aid formula. Rhode Island’s current distribution is outdated and does not recognize changes in district demographics because data has been frozen since 2004. Adjustments to education aid over the last several years have been pro-rated across school

districts, which has magnified the inequities. Ms. Gist then introduced Dr. Wong to speak about the key components of a funding formula, including:

- A foundation derived from a market-basket approach that represents an adequate funding level for a prototypical student;
- A student-success factor that builds on the work that was previously done by RIDE that will provide funding to support student needs using a poverty factor; and
- A state-share ratio that considers a district's revenue-generating capacity and concentration of at-risk students.

The work of Dr. Wong and his team incorporates empirical research and best practices that bring credibility to a proposed foundation formula that will be based on some of the best thinking in the country. Over the next two weeks, RIDE will continue to test and validate the calculations, and the Commissioner expects to share a final proposal, including a distribution by community, for Regents review at the next Board meeting. Proposed language would be developed to include a Regents-approved proposal consistent with their guiding principles and the Basic Education Program. Next, Dr. Wong reviewed the proposal, as attached. The group reviewed Rhode Island data and "best-practice" research – a single methodology for distributing state aid; a process that is fiscally responsible and objective; estimates of what the state needs to provide for a child to attain proficiency; and a system that phases out as many state categorical programs as possible to create greater flexibility, efficiency, and transparency. The group also discussed the "market-basket" concept; a poverty factor for free and reduced price lunch recipients; a funding formula based on student need and weighting the formula toward property values versus student need; and the tax capacity of districts. Next, the Commissioner asked Peder Schaefer to talk about Rhode Island property taxes and potential reforms. [Attached is Mr. Schaefer's power point and overview bullets.] Following Mr. Schaefer's presentation, Commissioner Gist told the group that RIDE staff will continue to work with Dr. Wong and will bring a recommendation before the Board on February 4th.

Review Arts Standards for Public Hearing

Commissioner Gist invited RIDE staff member Rosemary Burns to join her at the table for the presentation of the DRAFT Rhode Island Arts Grade-Span Expectations. She told the Regents that the proposed grade-span expectations for the arts have been developed by certified arts educators, teaching artists, community arts members, higher-education professors, parents, and students using National Dance, Music, Theater, and Visual Arts Standards, model state standards from across the country, and frameworks developed by state arts educators in the late 1990s. The GSEs include four "big ideas" that are unifying elements among the four art disciplines. They are: artistic process: problem-solving and invention utilizing processes of the art form; cultural contexts: creatively expressing values and ideas of human experience; communication: achievement of expression and meaning; and aesthetic judgment: knowledge to reflect upon and evaluate works of art. Ms. Burns told the group that the draft arts GSEs were approved for public distribution in

March 2009 and distributed electronically across the state. Technical assistance was then provided in several locations across the state to “unpack” intentions of the GSEs. Overall, feedback from the community has been highly supportive. If passed at the Board’s February 4th meeting, public hearings will be held in February with adoption scheduled in March or April.

Chairman Flanders announced that there would be no executive session. The approval of the RIDE Professional Employees Local 2012 collective-bargaining agreement would be brought back before the Board for consideration on February 4th.

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.